1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

574 184 African churches which countenance polygyny. The difficulty is partially overcome in some well-to-do Christian families by hiring labour to work in their fields and to fetch water and wood, and by offering visitors coffee or tea, which are easily prepared, in place of home-brewed beer; nevertheless the conflict between [182] the value of hospitality (to which pagan and Christian alike subscribe, though they define it rather differently) and the value of monogamy, is often acute.

621 The mutual obligations of neighbours are not confined to feeding one another, for neighbours share with relatives the obligation of giving sympathy and assistance at the various crises in Nyakyusa life; the concept of *ukwangala* includes keeping on good terms with people by being sympathetic and obliging.

764 621 All the members of a village (except young children) are obliged to attend every burial of an adolescent or adult in that village; they go to mourn the death of a neighbour or condole with one who is burying a 'son', for if a man dies while his father (or father's full brother, or his own senior brother) is yet alive, he is often buried in his 'father's' homestead.[1] Where a youth or man is buried by his 'father', his fellow villagers must attend the funeral also, but boys and young men need not go to a funeral in their fathers' village unless it is a village-mate of their own who is being buried.

[159] Funerals are occasions for feasting and dancing, so the obligation 'to mourn one another' (*ukulelamela*) does not press hardly, and the Nyakyusa feeling is that no one would fail to come unless he were a witch, and fearful lest his victim rise from the grave and denounce him. 'If a man does not go to his neighbour's burial then at once people say: "It was you who bewitched him. [illegible] certain evidence that the truant is 'a harsh man who does not keep on good terms with people (*nkali, atikwangala kanunu nalonda*)'.

764 One neighbour, 'he who went about most with the dead man', is appointed by the headman of the village to help the relatives dig the grave, and village neighbours must also bring small gifts of food and firewood for the entertainment of the many guests.

[1] A married man whose 'fathers' are dead, or do not choose to exercise their right to bury him, is buried at his own home, and a woman who has borne a child is buried at her husband's home.

1: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

was a fierce man in war, and always quarrelling with and spearing his fellows, he would say with pride: "He is my son!" And if he heard people saying: "The son of so and so is a fierce man", he would rejoice. And if the son wished to marry young his father would refuse him cows, saying: "Swagger first." That truculence (*ubukali*) is a form of swaggering for men, is still evident in the funeral dance, when men charge up and down with spears, displaying their strength, and take umbrage at the slightest thing (*vide infra*, p. 151). And marriage was deliberately delayed partly because a bachelor was thought to be a fiercer warrior than a married man.

This admiration of truculence, as shown in the funeral dance, reveals a contradiction in Nyakyusa values. On the one hand urbanity and good temper are praised—they are intrinsic to *ukwangala*—on the other truculence. Is the opposition one between old and new values, or is the contradiction itself traditional? It is obvious that a readiness to fight was a quality valuable to the village in the days of inter-village warfare, and the Nyakyusa tell of murderers and even thieves being reprieved just because they were so useful in war. 'We did not drive away violent men (*abagasi*) in the old days; we said: "They will fight along with us in the future" '; whereas since the pacification of the country, quarrelsome men have become nothing but a liability, likely to get their fellows and their chief into trouble with the Administration. The Christian emphasis, also, is all on the virtue of peaceableness. There has probably been some change in values with the disappearance of war from the villages, but we think that a certain contradiction always existed: swaggering young men were admired, and children were warned not to be quarrelsome (*ukali*) [illegible] practising witchcraft, or rouse the anger of a witch. The contradiction is not, of course, peculiar to Nyakyusa society, and it may be resolved by defining the groups within which fighting is excluded, and those in which it is approved. Most Nyakyusa would hold that in the old days quarrelsomeness within the village was bad, that towards members of another village of the same chiefdom it was allowable, and towards members of another chiefdom it was good. In the wider society of to-day the same distinctions are apparent: the war dance at funerals is limited lest it lead to fighting between villages (*vide infra*, p. 151) but admir-

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

ing audiences watch their friends in the detachment of the King's African Rifles at bayonet drill in Masoko.[1]

Display is felt to be particularly appropriate to young people, and bachelors were held to be the fiercest warriors, but neither dancing nor fighting was confined to young men. The chief Mwaipopo (Plate V) was famous as a skilful and ardent dancer when over seventy, and the leader in war was the senior headman of the country, who, if not already married when he took office, had to marry almost immediately, since his wife shared in the ritual of establishing his house. Furthermore the villages of married men of the ruling generation fought, as well as the villages of their bachelor brothers and sons.

That the Nyakyusa had some skill in warfare is certain, for they defeated and drove off Ngoni raiders and warriors of the Sangu chief Merere,[2] but they never developed a military kingdom like that of the Bemba to the west, or the Hehe to the east, nor did they raid at large like the Masai and Ngoni. Their geographical position sheltered them very considerably from outside attack, and discouraged raiding abroad. They confined themselves mostly to lifting the cattle of neighbouring chiefdoms.

Cattle, whether they be spoils of war or inherited wealth, are displayed. Not only does a long byre add to the dignity of a homestead, but, when there is some ceremony at the home of a rich man, he shows off his herd by driving it round and round the homestead. At other times his sons gallop it along the village street, the iron bells with which the animals are adorned ringing merrily. Nyakyusa smiths make cow-bells in sets,[3] to chime in harmony, and the aim of a rich man is to own a set of bells which ring a full chime, and a herd large enough to carry them. Nowadays those who own bicycles display them in the same sort of way, riding round and round the homestead at a ceremony, and ringing the bells madly.

Unlike the enjoyment of good company (*ukwangala*), display

[1] This detachment was not supposed to include Nyakyusa who were recruited for a detachment stationed outside the district, but in fact Nyakyusa got in by posing as men from Ngonde, Nyasaland.

[2] D. Kerr-Cross, 'Crater-lakes north of Lake Nyasa', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. V (1895), p. 119–20; Lugard, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 56, speaks of the Nyakyusa as 'brave in war'.

[3] We deposited a set in the Livingstone Memorial Museum, Livingstone, N. Rhodesia.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

ance among Nyakyusa Christians, and the tendency for fathers and sons to build fairly close to one another.

The forms of display approved among Christians are also changing with the change in the sex code. The nakedness of the Nyakyusa shocked the missionaries, and it is insisted that Christian women, as well as men, should wear at least one cloth; also many of the traditional dances and songs are felt by the Nyakyusa converts themselves to be incompatible with the profession of Christianity, consequently at funerals and weddings there is often a group of Christians dancing quite separately from pagans, and singing their own song, which, more often than not, is a hymn. A wedding dance to a hymn does not appear incongruous to Nyakyusa, as it does to European observers.

e. Wisdom

There is a very close connection between the values we have cited, and all save one are coherent with one another. The enjoyment of good company implies observance of the rules of decency; *ukwangala* is between equals, not between parents and children; it merges into neighbourliness, for one who does not help, or seek help from, a neighbour is unfriendly (*atikwangala kanunu*); and it is dependent upon that generous hospitality which is one of the manifestations of dignity (*ubunitya*).

The one value which is not wholly coherent with the others is the value of display (*ukumoga*). Certain forms of display are compatible with urbanity and friendliness between neighbours, but the swaggering truculence of the warrior is not—it is liable to

and display also ceases to be compatible with other values when it involves adultery. The friends of a woman who has eloped with a lover may greet her with the phrase: '*Ndaga, umogile!*' which literally translated means 'Thank you, you have displayed yourself', and implies, 'Congratulations! Had a good time?' But no Nyakyusa would maintain that to commit adultery was, in general, good.

The all-embracing virtue to the Nyakyusa is wisdom (*amahala*). It includes the enjoyment of company and the practice of hospitality, for no man is wise who is surly, or aloof, or stingy; it includes neighbourly behaviour, dignity, and respect for law and

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

state, and the property of a convicted witch went to the chief. Therefore the lineage was not the unrivalled principle of social grouping among the Nyakyusa as it was among the Tallensi or Nuer, but it was a corporate body.[1]

The existence of three types of groups among the Nyakyusa made for social integration. The divergent interests of villages were checked by the fact that every man had kinsmen in many other villages upon whom he was dependent, economically and ritually; the fissiparous tendencies of lineages were checked by the loyalties of lineage members to different villages; and the villages and lineages were all held to be dependent upon their chief for the fertility of their land, control of the weather, and success in warfare.

Since an account of the Nyakyusa age-villages and an outline of their kinship system have already been published,[2] we may now turn directly to the topic of this book, their religion.

The traditional religion of the Nyakyusa people has three elements: First, there is a lively belief in the survival of the dead and in the power of senior relatives, both living and dead, over their descendants; secondly, there is a belief in medicines, that is, in a mystical power residing in certain material substances which is used by those who have the requisite knowledge; thirdly, there is a belief in witchcraft, that is, an innate power to harm others exercised by certain individuals, and in the mystical power of fellow villagers to punish wrongdoers. This last power, 'the breath of men', is akin to witchcraft. It may be objected that a belief in witchcraft is in no sense 'religious', but to exclude discussion of it reference to the devil in a discussion of Christianity. Evil is a reality which must be interpreted in one fashion or another in every cosmology.

The belief in the survival of the dead and the power of senior relatives, is expressed in a series of elaborate rituals, one set of which concern only kinsmen and are directed towards the im-

[1] There appear to be many gradations between a society with no corporate lineages, such as the Lesi, and one like the Tallensi in which the lineage is the basis of all important social groups, just as there are gradations between a stateless society in which all offences are treated as quarrels between groups of kinsmen, and a primitive state in which any serious assault is an offence against the state.

[2] Monica Wilson, op. cit. and 'Nyakyusa kinship' in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, ed. Radcliffe-Brown and Daryll Forde (1951).

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

to the dancers a heightened sense of their own warlike quality: 764
'We used not actually to fight at burials so much as to dance and 535
become conscious of our strength for future wars against other 721
chiefdoms, when, on another day, we would go to raid their cows.'

But although an actual fight was not a necessary part of the 578
funeral it very frequently occurred; and burials are still one of 764
the most usual occasions of spearing. 'In the old days, before the 721
country was at peace, we men often fought at burials; we ran in 535
front spearing one another, while our wives ran behind calling the
war-cry and watching the prowess of their husbands.' So far from
rituals having the sole function of promoting social integration, as [182]
some would have us believe, the burial rites of the Nyakyusa were
occasions on which existing antipathies continually found overt
expression in fighting and new antipathies arose; but the quarrels
were not within the mourning lineage.

The fights normally followed the lines of division between chiefdom and chiefdom, village and village. Kinship and affinity have always for some men extended beyond the single chiefdom; and to the burials of these people, if they are in any way eminent, the young men of other chiefdoms often come to dance. And while today, with a well-established tradition of peace, there are fewer smouldering enmities between chiefdoms, forty or fifty years ago it was scarcely possible for the young men of two chiefs to meet peaceably; cattle-raids, abductions of women, defeats and victories in battle were too hot in the memory. Sometimes an accidental jostling, sometimes a deliberate insult was the occasion for a running fight.

At burials there was often war. If the men of two chiefdoms were there together at a burial they would quarrel and fight. Sometimes the fight began when one hurled his spear into the ground and then pulled it up so as to pitch earth on to another man. Perhaps there would be only a few men dancing at first and many sitting down; but when a neighbouring chief was heard coming with his men, and the sound of the trumpet and flute[1] came to us, then we said: 'If we sit still they will say there were no men but only women at that burial, let us dance too!' So we would get up and dance, and then if the others did anything there would be war.

And fights sometimes occurred between two villages of the same chief.

[1] The trumpet of horn and the bamboo flute which used to accompany the war-dance. They are now seldom heard; drums have superseded them.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

182 ●

It has been shown that participation in rituals compels the gathering together and co-operation of kinsmen and of affines, most of whom live dispersed in different villages; it compels the provision of lavish feasts; it compels respectful behaviour to senior kinsmen and, more particularly, affines; it compels an erring son to beg forgiveness of his father, and the father to receive him; it compels confession of anger and formal forgiveness between kinsmen. In short, the rituals compel outward conformity to an approved system of co-operation and respect; the expression of certain sentiments is compulsory whatever the individual may feel. It is clearly understood that not all feel the sentiments they express: Nyakyusa women commented on the fact that certain widows were not really grieved at their husbands' deaths, though they wailed and smeared themselves with mud: but the corporate expression *tends* to induce the appropriate feelings. Even to an outsider the pressure of the ritual is strong; the sense of terror and grief in a throng of women, close packed, and weeping and wailing, is intense. Moreover, though the emphasis is on outward conformity, there is constantly the suggestion that inward attitudes are significant: anger 'in the heart' is dangerous; the medicine will injure any who do not indeed forgive their kinsmen (p. 182, 266 ff.). It is because they think inward attitudes matter that the Nyakyusa lay so much stress on confession (*ukusosya*), admission of a grudge or anger, as the essential preliminary to reconcilation.

This brings us to the next point: the rituals provide for the public expression of anti-social attitudes or tendencies, and their public rejection. The Nyakyusa hold that merely to suppress grief or hatred is useless, and likely to increase it, and they constantly press on one another the need to *ukusosya*, to 'bring out', to confess, and affines is the prelude to reconcilation; the open expression of antagonism between two lineages, which are then reconciled by the exchange of gifts and feasts in the Lugulu ritual of vituperation, is but the most dramatic instance of a common theme. The violent expression of grief and anger in the death ritual precedes an assertion of life, and joy in living. The miming of the actions of a madman, and identification with the shades, in the rituals at death, puberty, and twin birth, may be interpreted as an expression of the desire to wallow in filth and the desire for death, preceding purification and rebirth. In short, the rituals are both

[1] Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, pp. 99–100.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

182 affirmative and cathartic: they express certain attitudes and make explicit and reject others. But how far the catharsis is efficient, how far the rituals cleanse man of anti-social attitudes, we do not know. In many religions there is liable to be a gap between attitudes expressed in ritual and everyday behaviour: between the rejection of anger, hate, envy, and neglect in the ritual, and brotherly co-operation between the worshippers in secular affairs. A pagan Nyakyusa may share the sacrificial flesh with his brother but quarrel over cattle and work sorcery against him; just as we white South Africans may take Communion with a fellow Christian who is black, yet compel him to live in squalor far separate from us; but the very reluctance of most whites in South Africa to take Communion along with blacks is evidence that the symbolic act is not without significance.

(c) *Ultimate values and cultural variation*

121 There are certain general hypotheses about the nature of ritual in society, which the analysis of Nyakyusa rituals and comparison with other societies suggest.[1]

First, those things are treated as sacred which are necessary to the survival of the group. In every society we find the *means of subsistence* sacralized (whether it be crops, cattle, hunting, or fishing, or a combination of these) together with fire and shelter. The reproductive cycle is always treated as sacred, the primary relationships of parents and children and siblings, the group or community as a whole, and significant changes in status within it. Law is holy in the sense that right behaviour (or morality) is always linked to religion.

As economy and social structure vary, the particular items treated as sacred vary. This is clearly recognized by the Nyakyusa themselves, as the texts quoted show: the foods used in the rituals are commonly the staple foods of the local area. And if a number of Bantu-speaking groups are compared it is plain that the location of the altar varies with the economy. Among the Nyakyusa it is the earth of the banana grove; among the pastoral Nguni it is the cattle byre; among Lunda hunters it is a tree or branch adorned with trophies of the chase.[2] The exception is when rituals

[1] My debt to Professor Radcliffe-Brown will be obvious to all students of anthropology.

[2] V. W. Turner, 'Lunda Rites and Ceremonies', *Occasional Papers of the Rhodes-Livingstone Museum*, No. 10, 1953.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

121 842 degree. Sir Charles Darwin has suggested that those societies which put a premium on fertility will ultimately be dominant, by the weight of numbers,[1] but the evidence from Africa suggests that those societies which have in fact survived have regulated reproduction. Of the concern of the Nyakyusa with fertility there can be no doubt. The gods *are* the reproductive principle expressed in the idiom of a patrilineal society—'the shade and the semen are brothers'. One of the express purposes of the rituals of kinship, as well as of the communal rituals, is to secure fertility; one of the major sanctions of religion is the fear of the loss of it. And further than this, all their major activities are expressed in terms of the reproductive cycle and thought to be linked to it. The association of crops, and cattle, and hunting, and war with pregnancy and menstruation in women has already been indicated, and a more general connection between fertility in crops, and cattle, and men will be shown in the account of communal rituals. The two principal crafts, iron smelting and bark-cloth making, are associated with the act of coition. So also are fire-making, grinding, cooking, and eating; and the hearth and hut are identified with the union of husband and wife, and with childbirth. Whether such a preoccupation with fecundity, and the tendency to express all activities in terms of the reproductive cycle, are stronger among the Nyakyusa than among most other peoples we do not yet know, but at least they do not minimize its importance. It is the more significant therefore that, though maximum fertility of soil and stock was sought, there was a limitation of the human reproductive rate by deliberate spacing, and by limiting a woman's period of child-bearing to the years before her son's marriage. The Nyakyusa appear to have been an expanding people in relatively empty country, and the six or seven births per woman which this system allowed, combined with an infant mortality of perhaps 50 per cent, did not cause undue pressure upon their resources.

121 182 The particular form of limitation was linked to the structure of age-villages. The very wide spacing, with four to five years between pregnancies, and the taboo on a woman bearing after the marriage of her eldest son, ensured that, as a general rule, full brothers built in different villages. Thus the most closely-knit kinship group, that of full brothers and their sons, did not coincide with the local group, and the fissiparous tendency of lineages was checked by village loyalties. A group of full brothers and their

[1] Charles Darwin, *The Next Million Years*, p. 171 *et passim*.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

sons, between whom economic and religious bonds were strong, might be liable to isolate themselves, but could not do so when each brother and son lived in a different village. As among the northern Nguni and Tswana, who were organized in age regiments,[1] the principle of generation balanced the lineage principle, each holding the other in check.

Every society values co-operation: 'mutual aid' of one sort or another is a condition of social survival. The Nyakyusa rituals of kinship constantly reaffirm the mutual dependence of members of a lineage. They are 'members of one another' by virtue of their common blood, and what injures one may injure all. This is very clearly expressed in the rituals of death, twin birth, spearing, rotting the ropes, and protection against sorcery. The desire for health and plenty is the lever used to compel co-operation.

The elementary family of parents and children exists in every society of which we have evidence and may be taken as an institution necessary to survival, biological and social, though its form varies. In the death, and puberty, and birth rituals the close character of the bonds between parents and children, between siblings, and between spouses, is expressed; and the polygynous form of the Nyakyusa family, the closer bonds between a man and his first wife and those of the same 'house', and the identification of alternate generations, are also manifested. Thus the importance of the primary ties of parents and children, and of the 'house' within the polygynous family, is enhanced.

Differences in status exist in every society and must do so since leadership is necessary. Individuals move from one position to another during the course of their lives, and all societies celebrate such changes, thereby compelling public acceptance of them, and impressing on the individuals concerned their new duties and responsibilities. These are expressed very pointedly in the Nyakyusa admonition to a bride, or widow, or the mother of twins; in the greeting accorded to the heir to the father of a family; and in the oration to the shade. The rituals are a symbolic weaning from childhood, from the bride's father's lineage, from a former marriage, or from deceased parents, and compel acceptance of a new position; clinging to the old spells madness and death. The conception of being 'born again' and making a new start, is directly

[1] Among the Pedi it was taboo for full brothers to be initiated into the same regiment. G. M. Pitje, 'Traditional systems of male education among the Pedi', *African Studies*, 9 (1950), p. 109.

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

574 of more importance are the magistrate and the missionary, whose coming is usually heralded afar, by the report that he is already in the district, and is now perhaps only a day's journey off, slowly making his way from village to village, and dealing with whatever matters require his attention as magistrate or missionary. His coming is a matter of importance, for he will have a number of men with him who will need food, by the sale of which the villagers hope to make a few honest pence; though abundance of food is often given freely as a token of welcome. As the great man approaches the village, all the younger people come out to meet him with shouts of welcome, and if he is travelling in a *machilla*, the men will take the pole from the bearers, and with tremendous noise enter the village and deposit him at the school or the chief's house.

●182 And the sadder side? Sickness, epidemics, the per-
561 petual fear of witchcraft and of evil dreams fore-
578 shadowing ill, theft with its ever-present possibility of accompanying murder, quarrels that will not heal, forced marriages, and all the hidden cruelty that so rarely comes to the surface. Most pathetic of all, perhaps, the feud between old and young; the young all for to-day and to-morrow, for the new ideas, the hope of progress; the old for yesterday with its stability and ordered life; the young going in crowds to church, the old going secretly, and no doubt sadly, to worship at the ancient shrines, guarding the approaches lest the levity of youth should desecrate the place of terror, and evil come upon all the land; the

3: Mackenzie M-5 (ca. 1925) 1925
FN17 Ngonde FN17

young gathering around the white man, and lending themselves to his purposes, the old even to-day approaching him with reluctance, if at all, for to them he still retains much of the awe and hidden power with which he was credited in the earlier days.

The individual Konde is not so popular with white men as are members of other tribes; indeed there are employers who will not knowingly give work to a Konde at all. As workmen, it must be acknowledged that they are both less active and less reliable than surrounding tribes; they are neither so intelligent nor so loyal to contract. The Konde soon wearies of effort, and longs to get back to the lowing of his cattle and his pretty little hut in its banana grove. He loves his children, and the hope of being able to clothe them if he works well, does not compensate him for prolonged absence. Loyalty, as the Henga, Angoni, and Yao are loyal, does not distinguish the Konde, who show loyalty rather to chief and to tribal custom, than to the white man with his problematical benefits. They have never attached themselves to the European, as many of the surrounding tribes have done; for the Konde are less convinced than others that the one hope of Africa is the European and his influence; less convinced, be it added, that Africa stands so desperately in need of saving. That may be due to their unawakened condition—and, again, it may not. Educationally, too, they are less advanced than other tribes. Only a few of them are to be found in Government offices, or doing the skilled work which commands such good pay from Europeans; nor have they supplied,

5:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1938 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

pieces of ground above others. We must now pass to the third great determinant of the system of Nyakyusa land-tenure—the form of their society.

4. *THE FORM OF NYAKYUSA SOCIETY*

178 When we speak of "Nyakyusa society" to-day we refer to one small area within a world society, to a group of men distinguished from the rest of the world by the possession of a unique cultural idiom of their own but none the less bound to it by the strongest ties. Two generations ago Nyakyusa society was, unknown to our grandfathers, almost a world in itself, a world moreover which was split up into a number of tiny units in the shape of independent chiefdoms whose relationships with one another were of the loosest kind. The sons of men for whom society (that is effective relationship) was normally confined to two or three thousand families, all or nearly all consisting of personal acquaintances, now find their own destinies inextricably entangled with those of 1,600,000,000 people. To the Nyakyusa of to-day fluctuations in the world price of gold and coffee, the policies and incomes of the missionary Churches of Europe, the political relationships between Great Britain, her Dominions, the League of Nations and Germany are matters of some importance.

Nyakyusa society at the present moment thus includes a number of complicated relationships between the Nyakyusa group and the outside world which, in the recent past, had no existence at all. And the presence of these new relationships has profoundly modified the social forms which traditionally subsisted within the group itself. And as, with the spread of Christianity, Islam and civilised education, with the increase of skill and wealth and with the taking of new responsibilities, the Nyakyusa participate ever more and more fully in the life of the world society, so will their relationships with one another continue to change in form. For they will have upon them a primitive stamp, they still to some extent proceed from assumptions of isolation.

●192 423 The relationships of Nyakyusa society to-day fall into four main categories. There are, firstly, relationships of blood, marriage and affinity, secondly there are the various bonds of village life, thirdly there are those which subsist between members of the same chiefdom and, finally, there are those which bind the Nyakyusa to still wider groups, to the tribal group, the Territory, the World. And these relationships, as they are limited and defined, amongst other things, by rules of land-tenure, so also are they among the sources of these rules. Land is held in society and the form of society largely determines the manner of its holding.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

643 778 622 [754] [789] As we have seen, the chief's fearsome medicine *inyifwila* is thought to be very dangerous, and too much in the tails may cause them 'to fly about throttling men and cattle', but a chief is never accused of working witchcraft; it is inconceivable to the Nyakyusa that he could be. If the tails have got out of hand they are treated by a doctor 'to close them up'; no one suggests that the chief should get rid of them. It is commoners, 'black people', who are witches —cannibals, the eaters of raw flesh—as opposed to chiefs who, since the dawn of history, have killed cattle for meat and cooked their food like civilized men. But the distinction does not extend very far; junior kinsmen of the chief are 'commoners' and may well be accused of practising witchcraft.

There was a delicate balance of power in the Nyakyusa constitution between hereditary chief and commoner headmen and [182] the belief in the power of medicines and of witchcraft was an integral part of it. The chief provided fruitfulness by the power of his own body and his medicines; all men depended upon him for their well-being—food, cattle, children, success in war; but he in his turn depended upon the goodwill of his men led by their village headmen; without it he shivered and fell ill, only to be buried by them 'with the breath still in his body' lest the power of growth disappear with his breathless corpse.

Something of the quality of this mutual dependence and fear is conveyed in Kasitile's account of his own illness quoted in Chapter VIII.

(*e*) THE NECESSITY FOR HARMONY

182 643 622 793 [753] [821] [688] The welfare of the chiefdom is thought to depend upon harmony between the chief and his village headmen and priests, and also between the chief and his kinsmen. Any friction between them may result in public misfortune as well as sickness to the individual at fault. The quarrel of Kasitile, the priest, first with the Kinga priests, and then with the commoner priests of Mwaipopo's chiefdom was believed to affect the crops and the weather, as well as Kasitile's own health (*vide infra*, pp. 124-41), and Mwaipopo's failure to tell Kasitile formally of the death of their kinsman led to rain which spoiled the funeral dance. A quarrel between the lineages of two chiefs which should have sacrificed together was said to have been followed by a very poor millet crop (*vide infra*, pp. 79-80, 118, 136).

643 602 578 How the personal relationship of a chief with his kinsmen is

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

631 782 [721] north the Nyakyusa were continually at war; they did not trade or pray with them. Thus we conclude that participation in a common ritual is, in the Nyakyusa case, directly linked with a common origin and essential trade.

643 [769] [782] [821] The divine kings, Lwembe and Kyungu, were regarded as having power over certain areas, a power closely linked with rainfall. Indeed, one informant argued that the chiefs living around Masoko had never sent sacrifices to Lubaga, 'because when it rains at Lubaga the rain does not come as far as Masoko'. He was mistaken in his facts—the chiefs of Masoko did at one time send to Lubaga as Mwambete (162), chief at Masoko, himself admitted—but the argument points to a conception of supernatural power tied to a rainfall area. This notion was not, however, applied consistently.

643 173 The balance between secular and mystical power has altered during the past ten generations. The founding heroes, Lwembe and Kyungu, came as conquerors and must surely have led their men personally; but early in the history of Ngonde the Kyungu was secluded, and power was exercised almost exclusively by the nobles (*vide supra*, pp. 40-46); and the Lwembe also was, at one period, 'not seen by ordinary men' and led a life hedged about with taboos. There is sharp contrast in Nyakyusa tradition between the active chiefs who were warriors, and arbitrators, and worked hard in their fields[1] and the 'divine king' who lived in seclusion. As we have seen, the chiefs often delegated ritual functions, with the taboos involved, to a junior kinsman such as Mwamukinga (44) or Mwakihaba (45) (*vide* pp. 79-81, 114) whose heirs succeeded to the office. It is even possible that the [178] first Lwembe at Lubaga (Mwakalebela 19) took over ritual functions from his senior brother, Kalesi (18).[2] The present tendency is for the development of secular power and its separation from mystical power. The Kyungu is no longer a god but an administrator: the heir of the Lwembes sits as an elected representative of chiefs on the Local Council. In the traditional 182 177 Nyakyusa society ritual played an essential part in maintaining the balance between generations, sections, and social strata, and in

[1] In 1935 a young chief was bitterly criticized by his men because he 'never had a hoe in his hands' whereas his father and grandfather had (to our personal knowledge) been diligent in hoeing.

[2] But according to one excellent informant, Mwakisambwe (31) lived secluded while Mwakilima (31) 'fed men'—i.e. entertained.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

linking scattered political units, but that function is disappearing with the growth of trade and a centralized political authority. District Commissioner, Rural and District Councils, and Co-operatives supplant the 'divine king', and limit the power of local chiefs much more narrowly than he ever did.

182 177

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

thought to be embedded in the visibly growing parts of the body of a chief, and the horrifying practice of plucking out the hair and nails of a dying man is an assertion of the value of vitality, energy, force of personality in a leader.

The separate origin of chiefs and people, and the reciprocity between them, are constantly emphasized. Among many primitive peoples a myth of common origin is the charter for unity, and foreign lineages are linked by some fiction to the dominant line; but among the Nyakyusa it is the *reciprocity* between cultivators and cattle-owners, between 'owners of the soil' who ate their food raw and immigrants who brought with them cattle and fire, which is the basis of unity. The chiefs (like the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers or the Voortrekkers) speak of themselves as having brought civilization to a savage land, but they acknowledge the contribution of the previous 'owners of the soil' in a way in which the white Americans and South Africans do not. Characteristically, the dichotomy of chiefs and commoners is couched in terms of descent, but in fact this is a fiction, for the younger sons of chiefs join the ranks of the commoners, and the mother of a chief is often of commoner origin.

The complementary character of the economies of chiefs and commoners is matched, in belief, by a balance in mystical power. The divine kings have an innate creative power while the commoners have pythons in their bellies with which to destroy their enemies. It sounds like a myth of good and evil put about by the chiefs, but we never heard it expressed in that way even by Kasitile, who so feared and hated the commoner priests. The destructive power of the commoners can be used morally, to maintain the established order, as well as irresponsibly by witches. The constitution was a balance between chiefs and commoners, not a dictatorship. Chiefs maintain their position by feasting their men on beef, and this, the Nyakyusa think, prevents the witches from attacking; eated with meat their pythons 'lie quiet'.

Ultimate power is symbolized by the python, for though the chiefs—like English kings—are commonly associated with lions and leopards, the terror of the grove of Lubinga, and the source of the *ifingila* medicine upon which the potency of divine kings and chiefs depends is a python, like that which lies in the belly of a witch. The most fearful thing of the tropical forest (and the forests on the Livingstone escarpment and Rungwe mountain are but the remains of much greater ones) is a natural symbol for power.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

CHAPTER XIV

RELIGION AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

182 In this chapter we shall seek to show how the traditional communal rituals both reflect and maintain the traditional political structure, and to consider in what measure the change from paganism to Christianity compels a change in other aspects of the society, or, alternatively, how far the economic and political changes taking place among the Nyakyusa compel a change in religion.

182 773 769 693 The heroic myths are the charter for chieftainship. The heroes from whom the chiefs are descended are pictured as creators and benefactors, the authors of fertility and civilized living. But myth and ritual also entrench the rights of commoners and unify people of different stocks by asserting their complementary diversity. No ritual can be celebrated without the participation of commoner priests. They 'speak out' at rituals and bring public opinion directly to bear on the chief, whose own health is held to depend upon their goodwill; at the same time the whole country looks to the chief as the source of fertility in man and beast and field.

182 643 796 782 Ritual was the integrating force with the widest range in the traditional society. Independent chiefs, even those whose people were culturally as different as the Nyakyusa and Kinga, joined in sacrifice to Lwembe and Kyala and were mystically dependent upon one another. As Kasitile put it 'the Kinga come (to Lubaga) both when there is trouble in our land and in theirs'. In Ngonde the 'divine king', the Kyungu, who controlled a flourishing trade in ivory, developed secular as well as ritual functions and emerged as a paramount chief, but in the Nyakyusa valley the ritual bond had no secular backing save the exchange of iron and salt for food, which linked Kinga and Nyakyusa in a tenuous partnership. The sacrifices to the Lwembe did not exclude war between chiefs who acknowledged him, nor did sacrifice to their common ancestor exclude war between Mwaipopo (116) and Mwaihojo (142), but the necessity of co-operation in sacrifice compelled later reconciliation. Perhaps the insistence on the sacredness of the heroes and their living representatives, the elaborate ritual of

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

chieftainship, and the dependence upon medicines as a means of enforcing law were connected with the ineffectiveness of secular authority. Certainly the Kyungu's emergence from seclusion, and the dropping of the taboos which surrounded him were connected with his acquisition of economic power; but we know too little of the conditions that make for elaboration of ritual to postulate any general connexion between the absence of ritual in public life and the effectiveness of secular authority.

The cycle of sacrifices to the heroes and dead chiefs among the Nyakyusa is more than an ancestor cult, for it includes non-relatives among its priests and beneficiaries; but it has many of the features of an ancestor cult, among them the identification of piety with conservatism. A good man follows exactly in the footsteps of his father who becomes his god. This is reconciled with a myth of a new beginning, ten generations ago, when civilized life came to the Nyakyusa valley, and the new beginning is celebrated each generation with the 'coming out' of the young chief and his contemporaries.

All Nyakyusa rituals are cathartic in the sense that they make explicit and seek to dissipate, by their very expression and rejection, certain anti-social tendencies. In the Nyakyusa view the root of evil is 'anger in the heart' unadmitted and corrosive, and only by an open confession can it be overcome.[1] Hence in every situation of misfortune, public or private, men are pressed to 'speak out' (*ukusoya*) and admit their anger. At the 'coming out' the conflict of generations is expressed in the prolonged debate over the date of the celebration and the detailed arrangements, and in the dancing and slaughter of cattle, and is finally resolved when authority and land are handed over to the young men by their fathers. The fissiparous tendencies of a chiefdom are made explicit and canalized in constitutional form by the division of the old chief's country into two, under his senior sons; and criticism of the young chiefs is made explicit in the formal admonition by the father's village headmen. The rejection of conflict is clearest at the annual purification when men throw out the ashes contaminated by family bickering and the cannibalism of witches, and *fight* one another 'that the homesteads may be peaceful'. This fighting is 'to bring out war from within (*ukusoya*)',

[1] cf. *Good Company*, pp. 99-112. The belief that a witch to recover must confess if the patient was to recover was the reason for the torture of witches in many African societies.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

and is therefore to be interpreted as 'confession of anger', rather than as 'rebellion'.

Sometimes there is an expression of *opposite* tendencies, both implicitly approved. The sacrifices to the heroes and at the groves of the chiefs emphasize seniority and precedence, and express the dependence of junior on senior kinsmen, but the myth, recalled in every celebration, tells of the surpassing power of the son or younger brother in the beginning of time, and the junior brother of a chief often holds office as a priest. Then there is the drama of driving away the shade and bringing him back transformed, which is so characteristic of the rituals of kinship and appears again at the cleansing of the country. Such contradictions are doubtless expressions of ambivalent attitudes among the participants themselves, and of the attempt in ritual to reconcile conflicting social principles—in these instances authority with the rights and duties of juniors, and change with continuity.

In a society without written records legal certainty depends very largely on publicity. This is apparent in the law relating to marriage contracts and family inheritance,[1] and still more so in the law of the chiefdom. The ritual of 'coming out' celebrates radical changes in social status, and the public recognition of the leaders, members, and territorial boundaries of villages, as well as of the heirs to chieftainship. Thus certainty in these matters is assured. There is no positive value of the co-regency of father and son (as in ancient Egypt),[2] but the installation of the young chiefs before the death of their father serves to mitigate conflicts over the succession. Confusion over village boundaries and village leadership often appears when the ritual has not been celebrated, for there is no public definition to refer to.

How close is the link between religious belief and practice and social structure? There is no doubt that the sacrifices to the dead chiefs and heroes and the traditional rituals of kinship supported the former political and kinship structure of the Nyakyusa. Their performance compelled co-operation between kinsmen,[3] between neighbouring chiefs, and between chiefs and people. How far then does the change in religion, begun when the first Christian convert professed his new faith, compel a change in the social

[1] Godfrey Wilson, 'An Introduction to Nyakyusa Law', *Africa*, vol. ix, 1935, p. 69.

[2] H. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp. 101-6.

[3] cf. *Rituals of Kinship*, pp. 130-200, 207.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

structure? And how far does the new economic and political organization produce a change in religion? These theoretical questions can be answered only by a series of comparative studies. Here there is evidence for one area alone, and the conclusions which we postulate can be established only if they hold in a whole range of societies.

Christianity implies an emergence from the nexus of kinship, for the worshipping group is two or three believers, not a body of kinsmen, and conversion is a personal choice. This is more obvious in a missionary church than in one long established, for, as we have seen, the convert in a pagan community must withdraw from his kinsfolk to become a Christian,[1] but it remains true, even in a Christian society. The new doctrine implies a body of believers—a Church. The particular form varies, but the Church has appeared wherever the Christian faith has been established. In short, we argue that the change in religion necessarily disrupts an organization based primarily on kinship and establishes a new type of organization based partly on voluntary association. With the change from the ritual of the lineage to the ritual of the Church the authority and leadership of senior kinsmen is diminished; they are replaced by 'elders' and priests or pastors whose basis of authority is not birth, but selection by the Church. Furthermore, association for worship becomes a pattern for association in other fields, and the Church is the training ground among the Nyakyusa, as it has been among so many other peoples, for organizers of other types of societies.

And not only is kinship subordinated to faith; the forms of kinship are themselves modified. From the time of their first arrival the missionaries have taught that Christianity implies monogamy and they have baptized no polygynist who does not put away his additional wives. This teaching has been questioned by many Africans and by some European missionaries themselves, who doubt the wisdom of persuading a man already married to send away his wives—or even of countenancing such an action. But the rule of monogamy has remained as a condition of membership in all the Churches with European connexions.[2] It has been rejected, as we have seen, by two of the 'independent' African

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 157-9.

[2] The rule was suspended for a brief period in one mission working not far from the Nyakyusa area, but was later enforced. cf. Lyndon Harries in *Survey of African Marriage and Family Life* [edited by A. Phillips], pp. 341-2.

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
F7117 Ngonde F7117
Nyakyusa

Churches in the area. Nevertheless the bulk of professing Christians are monogamists, though it is still customary and, in Rungwe District, economically profitable, for a rich man who is not a Christian to have more than one wife. The difficulties of establishing monogamy are accentuated by the great disproportion in the numbers of men and women. If the figures available are accurate, a general acceptance of monogamy would mean that only about 70 per cent of the women could be married; therefore the Church is necessarily concerned in seeking an adjustment in the disproportion of the population—in keeping the men alive if our assumption that the shortage of men is due to a heavy male death rate is true.

The yeast of the gospel permeates still further. It is taken to imply the freedom of an individual to accept or reject a partner in marriage. This has been maintained from the first in the Nyakyusa Church, and is enforced by the courts, which apply a conception of personal rights springing from the Christian tradition.

Most Nyakyusa men attribute the rapid rise in the divorce rate to this new 'freedom' of women. Christian teaching stresses the family and the sanctity of marriage, but it ignores the lineage. In the traditional rituals of kinship the lineage is represented again and again, while in Christian ritual it is the elementary family and the Church that are pictured. The preoccupation with fertility and the reproductive cycle was linked with the glorification of the lineage itself, and it disappears when the lineage ceases to be the basis of social grouping.

How closely linked are symbols to other aspects of a society? Our hypothesis is that they are relatively free, but it can be shown that many of the symbols used in the traditional rituals of the Nyakyusa reflect the economy, and vary somewhat from one area to another, with the staple crops. The development of trade or of new crops is a prerequisite for using the symbols of bread and wine traditional in the Christian rituals, and even the 'independent' African Churches use new foods, not the beer and bananas of the country; thus change in material symbols and change in economy may be directly connected. The imagery changes also with the changing social structure; Kyala ceases to be pictured as a senior kinsman, when the lineage organization begins to weaken; he is God the father of a family rather than an early member of the royal lineage. But there is no evidence that

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
F3617 Ngonde F3617
Nyakyusa

particular symbols are tied to a particular social structure; the poet makes his choice within the whole range of the familiar.

The impetus to change has come both from the religious field and from the secular. For example, the pressure towards monogamy among the Nyakyusa has been religious; given plentiful land and cash crops additional wives are an economic asset, not a liability. In this respect the contrast with the Ciokri in South Africa, where families are dependent for food on wage-earners in towns, and no man can support two families,[1] is marked. On the other hand, the decay of Nyakyusa age-villages is primarily due to economic pressure, though it is facilitated by the insistence of Christians that there is no danger in father-in-law and daughter-in-law meeting one another. The first generation of Christians living on mission land built villages apart for their sons, despite the teaching that avoidance of a father-in-law by his daughter-in-law was foolish, if not sinful. But a radical change in pagan observance of ritual avoidance is brought about by the general practice of going out to work for long periods, and the competition for coffee and rice-lands, which makes the territorial separation of fathers and sons impossible. As we have shown, young men going to work commonly leave their wives in their fathers' homesteads, valuing the support and supervision given them there above the old stringency of avoidance and, where land is scarce and valuable, fathers do not move aside each generation to make way for their sons. Avoidance between father-in-law and daughter-in-law continues only in an attenuated form.

From German times control by a European government has compelled a modification of the traditional sacrifices to the heroes and of the ritual of chieftainship. How the Kinga priests came to Lubaga 'in secret' and how they failed to install a new Lwembe after the death of Mwakinnya about 1914 has been described. Killing a child to anoint a drum or make medicine for the fields, compelling a man to accept a dangerous office, killing chiefs because they are ailing, or plucking off their nails before they die; all these are actions which are held, and must be held, to be 'contrary to natural justice' by any Western government. Here the change in political organization compels a change in ritual and there is evidence that belief in the traditional forms is much diminished, though not dead. The European government also

[1] Rhodes-Livingstone Rural Survey. Vol. I, *The Economy of a Native Reserve*, by D. H. Houghton and E. M. Walton; vol. II, *Social Structure*, by M. Wilson *et al.*

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

expressed or resolved in ritual. The place for *shauge*—speaking out—is the council chamber not the sacred grove or the homestead where the shades gather, and the reconciliation of conflicts between chiefs, or between chiefs and District Commissioner or chiefs and commoners, is sought in a committee rather than a Church. Perhaps the greatest difficulty in modern administration in Africa lies in this very separation of activities, in the thinness of the bonds across the colour line, in the cleavage between secular and sacred. Some separation of the different aspects of a society is a concomitant of the increase in scale—it is one manifestation of specialization—but it is greater in Tanganyika with its diversity of religious traditions than it is in Britain with its common Christian history.

That there is a connexion between the form of faith and ritual and the form of social structure few would deny. The concern of the anthropologist is to define it; to plot the limits of autonomy between different aspects within societies. This can be done only by the patient analysis and comparison of many societies and this book is offered as a humble contribution towards such a comparative study.

In the Northern Highlands there is now a strong tendency for the tight village system to disintegrate as men seek to site their houses, each in his own coffee plot. In the Lake Plains also the structure of the age-village is changing – there the villages persist as such but they come to be inhabited by men of any age and new villages do not emerge with a new chief. No attempt is made here, however, to analyse these variations for they are only now beginning and no satisfactory, detailed information is available for the post-war cash economy of the highland areas.

The Government of Tanganyika has permitted the publication of this essay, and I wish to express my gratitude for its support. The essay is a modified version of my original Report which was presented to Government in January, 1956. The views expressed in it are my own and not those of Government. As usual in my work as Government Sociologist, I have received much valuable assistance, advice and information from officers stationed in the area. The Nyakyusa themselves, as during my first enquiry, were usually cooperative, and at least some of them welcomed my work as a contribution to the easement of their novel difficulties. It would not have been surprising had they remained obdurate and antagonistic towards my enquiries about their land, for like many modern Africans they have a sense of insecurity which is not susceptible to reason. In fact I was able without much difficulty to make any enquiry I wished, to measure sample areas and to discuss the situation in all its aspects. Perhaps it is that an African people welcome a sympathetic enquirer and in their problems genuinely want assistance. The task of a sociologist is of course in some ways rather easier than that of an administrator or technical officer who has to persuade the people actually to accept and practice new ways and to abandon old ways. It is hoped that this essay may be of assistance both to these officers and to the people whom they are attempting to assist and teach.

Finally, I must thank the East African Institute of Social Research which has accepted this essay for publication, and especially Dr. L. A. Fallers who kindly read and criticised the original draft and who drew the two sketch maps.

Note: The term, the "Lake Plains", as used in this essay is to be understood to cover the major part of the modern local government area under the Ntebela Rural Council. Omitted are the small groups of Kisi (Ikombe) and Ndali (Nganu) peoples to the extreme east and west respectively. This area contains the alluvial flood plains surrounding the northern tip of Lake Nyasa, and the lowest foothills to the north where the country begins its steep incline towards the Poroto Mountains. To the south lies the lake and to the south-west, beyond the meandering Songwe river, lie the bushlands of the northern part of the Nyasaland Protectorate. To the east are the towering Livingstone Mountains and to the north live the other Nyakyusa groups in the highlands.

The area comprises a fairly compact social and economic region with a common historical tradition. Several of the indigenous chiefdoms stretch across the intermediate boundary between flood plains and foothills. With but one exception the present chiefs are lineal descendants, in their various houses, of the original Mwakyusa who led the people into this lowland area five generations ago. The modern inhabitants are pre-eminently the Nyakyusa-proper.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

believed that parents and children should live apart.[1] In the same way, and for similar reasons, an elder brother tries to make provision for his junior when the latter marries if their father is already dead. The practice of the father is not a legally required one, although it is nowadays increasingly common and sons have begun to expect it: the practice of an elder brother is now legally required in the matter of land and probably always has been in the matter of cattle.

The difficulties are obvious when a man dies and leaves several sons but only a small-sized holding. To date no clear ruling has emerged and unfortunately the African District Council did not deal specifically with such details when introducing the new law. How much land an eldest brother can reasonably retain for himself is perhaps not determinable in practice except in specific relation to the nature, locality and fertility of the holding in question, the plots already held by the man himself, the needs and number of the younger brothers and any holdings they may have, and the location of the villages in which they severally live. There is also plenty of scope for disagreement between half-brothers over portions of the paternal holding which had been retained by the father himself for his own use; over portions allocated to a wife who has borne no sons or whose sons have died, and over permanent trees. The situation is still fluid and there has not yet been time enough for a common and generally acceptable solution to be established. Consequently each group of sons tries to solve its own particular problems in this matter as best it can, torn between old values and new attitudes and needs.

Relations between both full-brothers and half-brothers tend often to be severely tried at times of inheritance. It is not primarily, I think, a case of brothers' greed for valued land tending to overcome bonds of fraternity and co-operation; but it is rather that a father's arable holding is often not able to provide adequate amounts of arable land for each of his sons, and yet they find the very greatest difficulty in obtaining land elsewhere. Already the traditional kin-group comprising the sons and grandsons of a group of full-brothers had begun to break down even before land shortage became serious. Now the group of full-brothers itself tends to be dispersed as men obtain land where they can and it is endangered by dissensions over land rights and land division. Increasingly, it seems, a Nyakyusa man is becoming detached from his brothers and he tends to establish an independent family unit comprising his immediate family alone – that is, himself with his wives and children. We cannot attribute the whole cause of this modern trend to land shortage and economic difficulties, of course, for involved also are new ideas of individualism and of personal effort and reward, and the decreasing need for the consistent support of brothers in social, economic and ritual activities.

Younger brothers may, and sometimes do in fact, agree that the paternal holding is already too small for further sub-division, or that the small parts which can be made available to them are scarcely worth having – especially if they live some distance away. On the other hand, the eldest brother may already have obtained a holding in his own village and is therefore willing to make only a small claim or none at all in the interests of his juniors, and he may then divide the inheritance amongst them alone. Usually, so acute is the dearth of land, the holding is divided between two or more brothers. It is split into small plots so that each brother has a share of paddy, food-crop and banana land, and these are commonly a half acre or even less in size nowadays. As already mentioned, by a kind of modern equity the local African courts generally favour the claims of the younger

1. See Wilson, M., 1951, p. 109 and passim. "The usual pattern of non-obligation to the succession of sons and brothers, of fathers to sons and daughters to sons." Ibid. p. 183.

10:Gulliver E-5 (1954-1955) 1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

Security of tenure has continued into European times, and although perhaps weakened slightly in one way through the exaggerated powers which accrue to modern Government-supported chiefs, it has been strengthened by the modern peace and rule of law and the more efficient system of justice provided by the established local courts. According to G. Wilson (Wilson, G., 1938, p. 32) the increase in the movement of individuals between villages in earlier European times (i.e., up to about 1940-45) directly caused a lack of attachment to individual plots, and thus security of tenure was not considered particularly important.

The new situation of land shortage does not affect the basic position, or rather, by producing a high scarcity value on land, it has brought about an intensification of individuals' rights over their holdings. No longer dare a chief or headman attempt to commit such illegal acts as the seizure of a villager's field, so long as that villager is not afraid to publicise the affair. A man is not, and cannot afford to be, prepared to lose his field, for he cannot replace it with any certainty, either in a convenient location or elsewhere. A headman may sometimes bring strong pressure to bear on some of the men of his village to try to persuade them to give up portions of their land to assist a newcomer or a landless neighbour, but a villager can and does refuse and there is no legal authority which can override him here. As the land shortage becomes more obvious and more acute so men become less willing to allow their holdings to be touched for any reason, by anyone. The re-allocation at a "coming-out" ceremony appears to have been dropped nowadays[1] and thus a man holds his land undisturbed until his death, when it passes by inheritance to his sons. There are cases now where grandsons of the original holder occupy land through undisturbed and undisputed inheritance. A man can, as he wishes, loan a kinsman or friend a plot in his holding, or he can make an outright gift. The principal restriction which remains is that a man must continue to live in the village in order to retain these rights; he must relinquish them if he permanently goes to live elsewhere. Nevertheless, the land of a well-established villager would be kept for him pending his hoped-for return, for if he has left in umbrage and fear because of suspected witchcraft, then he may be persuaded to come back after a time. The headman and his neighbours should in fact persist in their attempts to persuade him, even to the use of force, for this is not only a moral duty of age-mates and fellow-villagers but is also an effort to remove the implications of their alleged witchcraft and anti-social conduct.

Once, therefore, a man obtains land he has absolute rights in it during his continued residence in the village. Especially today, older men seldom shift their homes and almost all land is now held on a tenure which will be passed on by inheritance.

Boundary disputes are few. Usually, and increasingly, village boundaries are well known, and field boundaries invariably are. During my field measurements in the sample villages, I never met any difficulty with my local teams in quickly establishing the ownership and exact limits of any plot. Boundaries are usually marked by small ridges of accumulated debris or by narrow paths, and these form an intricate and irregular network throughout a village's arable area. They are so well known that there is very little scope for a greedy man to attempt to encroach on a neighbour's holding at hoeing time. If minor disagreements do arise at that season they can be immediately settled – by appeal to neighbours working nearby if necessary – and the headman or his assistant may well not be called in at all.

1. This is the case in the Lake Plains, in some of the six to seven-storey Highland strongholds where the rank [illegible] of land allocation is obtained, see pages 298.

10:Culliver E-5 (1954-1955)1958 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

my earlier labour migration enquiries in the Highlands, the village as a close residential unit is breaking up as the people are increasingly adopting the more common East African pattern of each family building its own homestead in its own land-holding. These northern Nyakyusa say that they must have their coffee plots next to their homesteads for the sake of continuous supervision, and that this is impossible (which is true enough) where men live close together in compact villages. Again, coffee plots, with their standing, permanent trees, have become a valuable item of inheritance; sons lose no opportunity of taking them irrespective of the locations of their coevals or of the identity of their immediate neighbours. The values of land, cash-crops and material progress are placed much higher than the traditional values of coevality; indeed, such traditional values are largely inconsistent with modern wants and aspirations.

Thus the Nyakyusa age-village has become almost obsolete and it would seem that it must inevitably vanish altogether even in the remaining conservative areas (e.g., in the east). Furthermore, its disappearance is leading to a distinct divergence between the Lake Plains Nyakyusa and those of the Highlands. How far this divergence will become permanent and basically significant cannot be foreseen as yet in this early stage. Clearly the compact village is best fitted to an arable economy of rice cultivation in the Lake Plains, and at least until there is further agricultural change it will persist as a most important social group.

Nevertheless, with its enhanced exclusiveness and relative social isolation and with renewed rivalry with its neighbours, the Lake Plains village is scarcely conducive to the encouragement of agricultural and economic development. Neither is it anything but harmful towards contemporary efforts in the politico-administrative sphere to reduce parochialism and to foster a sense of unity and co-operation beyond the village and the petty traditional chiefdoms. Whilst supervisory control of the land through the headman is in general excellent, reasonable and readily understandable to the people, yet the excess of restrictiveness, the competitive scrambling for vacated holdings and the jealous fears are surely more than merely unfortunate. There needs to be some modification to loosen the over-tight strings of village corporate ownership, to regularise the transfer of vacated holdings and to lessen the fears of village against village. These points are taken up again in Chapter V.

Cattle and Pastural Requirements

Unfortunately, no great accuracy can be presumed for the Rungwe District cattle censuses, but the available figures are summarised in Table VI.

TABLE VI
NYAKYUSA CATTLE

	1933 No. of cattle	1933 Acres per head	1933 Cattle per person	1933 Cattle per family of 5	1951 No. of cattle	1951 Acres per head
Lake Plains	31,418	4.1	0.3	1.5	36,833	3.5
Central Region ...	14,760	7.1	0.4	2	19,240	7.2
N.E. Highlands ...	19,097	7.6	0.4	2	17,745	8.4
N.W. Highlands ...	22,974	8.0	0.4	2	14,819	10.9
Total:						
Nyakyusa... ...	92,847	6.6	0.4	2	88,082	7.2

The indicated increase in the numbers of cattle may well be attributable only to improved census enumeration by the Veterinary Department.

Although 6.6 acres per head of cattle for all Nyakyusa country, and even 4.1 acres in the Lake Plains, might seem to be adequate in a country as